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Authenticity and Genuineness.

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THE usage of the terms authenticity and genuineness in literary questions is a veritable criss-cross of fallacies resulting from the failure to discriminate the fields in which the problems thus designated occur.

The general ideas lying in the words are recognized with considerable definiteness. Taking "authentic" as applied to a report or statement of any sort, a deed or will, a coin, or what not, and in every case it means that it is established by trustworthy evidence or authority. One asks the authority for a statement. If the authority is sufficient, the statement is pronounced authentic.

So of "genuine." A genuine document, coin, picture, or man, is one which is what it pretends to be.

This usage of "authentic" is at least as old as the time of Cicero, who twice speaks of certain things as authentically (*αὐθεντικῶς*) reported, meaning that the source of them was such as to evidence that they were really so, — the authority of the statement was sufficient.

The ancient and mediæval usage of the root was: (1) done with one's own hand, (2) authoritative, (3) not anonymous, (4) autographic. From the etymology and the last two usages it has been assumed that the fundamental conception was one of authorship, but the whole history and usage of the word seems to point to the idea of authority rather than authorship.

Even its usage as the "original" opposed to "copies" seems to have no necessary relation to authorship, or the question whose hand executed it, except so far as this gave *authority* to the document. Thus the usage throughout the middle ages was mainly of *documents*, — deeds, wills, charities, etc., where the question was not at all of authorship, but of authority.

So again, even the usage "not anonymous," which seems to depend on the idea of being executed with one's own hand, and so a question of whose hand it was executed by, has for its opposite *ἀδespoτος*, and

possibly refers to the lack of the authority which known authorship would give, and this idea seems to be clearly confirmed by the expression of Josephus, Ap. 1 : 16 : *ἐκ τῶν ἀδεσποτῶς μυθολογούμενον*, where he refers to those speaking without sufficient authority, quoting therefore as of doubtful *authority*, there being no question whatever of authorship, autography, or anonymousness.

The general usage is just this, as illustrated by 1 Tim. 2 : 12, "to have authority or dominion over." As applied to documents, therefore, authenticity is a question of authority, and when referring to the *document itself* simply a question of identity; when to the *contents* a question of their truthfulness.

The documentary usage, both on the diplomatic and the legal sides, is of authority. 1. "Authenticum dicitur quod auctoritatem indubitatam et legitimam habet, qualia sunt instrumenta quae vulgo dicimus originalia" (Forcellini, *Totius Lat. Lex.*, I. 310).

2. In law "it is only applied to instruments which bear the marks of having been executed under proper authority" (Brand & Coxe, *Dict.*).

It may be fairly said that Forcellini's definition of "Authenticus" gives the true inclusive definition of "authentic," "auctoritatem habens vel faciens."

Genuine (*γνήσιος*) is used in its strict sense both of objects and writings as early as the time of Galen.

In an often-quoted passage, Aulus Gellius, speaking of certain of Plautus' Comedies, which some have called in question, says, "Fretum . . . haud quicquam dubitavimus quin Plauti foret, et omnium maxime genuina." The question is one where numerous plays of contemporaneous writers were ascribed to Plautus. It is not, notice, a question that this is the identical play Fretum described by all, but whether this identical play was what it was described to be.

With a little analysis, this usage in respect of documents comes easily into relation with our untechnical usage.

A constant usage is of news in the daily papers. A report, *e.g.* that President Cleveland has made some appointment is "doubted," it will "bear confirmation" we say. Then Colonel Lamont, or some one who acts officially, "confirms" the statement, and the report is found to be "authentic." It was *true* before. It is now *authenticated*.

The idea of "authentic" is, therefore, "having undoubted authority," and of "genuine," being what it pretends to be.

The confusion is not so much in the meaning of the words as in the application of them.

The real elements of the problem may be seen in the ordinary bibliographical problems relating to a printed book.

Take, *e.g.* a book, "Ecce Homo." The first problem is simple identification. The average man says — a work by J. R. Seeley ; but there is another "Ecce Homo," and before one can tell whether the anonymous work before him is that of J. R. Seeley or the Baron d'Holbach, he must gather the evidence which authenticates it as the one or the other. But the authorship has nothing to do with this first question. It is only a way of describing a certain work with a certain content. The first problem is simple discrimination of the work from all others.

But given a work, there is a question of the authorship of that work, and on whatever authority it is placed on title-page or expressed elsewhere. Now the question is as to the authority for that ascription. "Ecce Homo," *e.g.*, is ascribed to Joseph Webb and to the Baron d'Holbach. It is the identical work which is not the "Ecce Homo" of Seeley, it has been authenticated as such. There is no question about the work itself, but only as to the ascription of the work. The ascription to Webb is found to be without authority, and that to d'Holbach authentic.

But given a work and all possible points concerning it authenticated, so that it is identified in every particular as itself, there remain the questions as to *itself* — the facts stated, and by the same process of evidence the authority for its statements is sought, and if there is sufficient authority — if the *statements* are authenticated — the contents are authentic or have authority.

Now, if a man should write another work, call it, *e.g.* "Ecce Homo," by J. R. Seeley, if this work is before one for examination, there are the same processes of discrimination, in which this is proved to be this work, is authenticated as this work, and regarded as this work, is therefore authentic. It may be that there are two J. R. Seeley's, who by some coincidence have written on the same theme ; but if not, then one is genuine and the other spurious. If evidence shows that this given book is not the work of Seeley, the *ascription* is not authentic and the work not genuine ; if the work before one proves to be really the work of Seeley, the *ascription* is authentic and the work therefore genuine.

Or a man might write a work on some other topic and assume the name of J. R. Seeley. The genuineness of the work depends on the authenticity of this statement.

After the discrimination of a work, and all the questions connected with it, comes the distinguishing of editions.

Is this the edition of 1799 or of 1813, and what, if any, is the difference. There may be additions, as in most new editions, or there may be matter left out (*e.g.* Arnold's "History of Rhode Island"), or it may be a simple unaltered reprint; but even in the reprint there are the questions of typography.

Precisely similar are the questions relating to documents.

1. Is this the identical document known as the Epistle of Barnabas? All mentions of it are examined. It is undoubtedly that document. It is authentic.

2. But, identified as a given work, there are still the questions of the condition of that work in the copy before us, — identically the question of the *editions* of a printed book, for a copy of a ms. is exactly equivalent to an edition or reprint of a work. There are, on the other hand, additions, omissions, or changes, and on the other typographical blunders. Here the question as to the *individual passages* may, in the case of interpolations, be a question of genuineness, but the question as to the whole work is as to its integrity.

3. Again there comes the question whether this work is what it pretends to be, — whether its claims regarding itself are true. If true, it is genuine; if not, spurious. Thus the Epistle of Barnabas, it is generally agreed, is not genuine.

This problem may involve pretensions of authorship, of purpose, of time of composition, or circumstances of composition.

4. The question of *authorship* again is entirely independent of the above questions. It simply *happens* to be one of the most convenient and common and useful of the descriptions of a work. It is in no-wise different from the questions of the *time* and *place* of composition. It is simply one fact of the work or concerning the work. It would often fall under the questions of the genuineness, but precisely the same class of questions would arise, if it were anonymous, to the Laodiceans, or from Rome. Authorship, place, and date are independent questions which may enter or may not.

5. But after all these questions, there is still the question of the truth contained in the work, — the historical facts, are they authentic? the pretended revelations, are they genuine? A perfectly authentic *work* may contain the most incorrect statements, and a perfectly genuine *work* the most barefaced lies.

So that precisely, as in printed books, there are three well-defined classes of questions.

(1) As to the *work*, (2) as to the *edition*, (3) as to the facts contained.

In (1) the question of authenticity is the *authority* for supposing it to be that work, *i.e.* the work generally known as such and such, and has reference only to questions of *authority*.

The first question is, Is this the book known as the “*Ecce Homo*” of the Baron d’Holbach? or is that the “*Epistle of Barnabas*”? It is that work, and therefore authentic.

The next question is, whether it is identically the same in all its particulars, and for the determination of this each item must be examined and its authority tested, *i.e.* the authenticity of each determined (*e.g.* any edition with “various readings”). On these multitudinous questions of authenticity depend the question of integrity.

Now, having a work as it really was, comes the discussion of its substance; and first, of its statements respecting itself — the question of genuineness of the *work*; and second, its statements of fact — their authenticity and consequent authority, and the authority, therefore, of the work.

In view of this analysis, note the two leading definitions of the terms.

Bishop Watson declares that “genuine” indicates that it was written by the person whose name it bears, and “authentic” relates to matters of fact as they really happened; Archbishop Trench and the later school that “authenticity” indicates that it was written by the person whose name it bears, and “genuine” that its received text is uncorrupt.

In criticism note: —

(1) The question of authorship in the first is only one of various questions involving the genuineness of the document, and in the other only one of the various factors which may enter into the authenticity of the work.

(2) Authentic undoubtedly does refer to matters of fact as they really happened, but if it is *the authenticity of a given work or document*, it is that document rather than the truth which it contains which is in question.

(3) These definitions cover only a small portion of the problems which are clearly questions either of genuineness or of authenticity. I submit, therefore, that the real order of the problem is: —

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| 1. Authenticity. | 3. Genuineness. |
| 2. Integrity. | 4. Authority. |

And that the exactness of the usage will be seen by observing the

simple logical principle of *always meaning the same thing*, instead of applying now to the work, now to a certain copy of a work, now to its text, and now to the truth which it contains.

Authorship, place, date, etc., are distinct problems which may or may not be involved in any of the above questions.

A document thus is authentic when identified as itself. If all its units are authentic its *integrity* is established, its text is pure. If its statements regarding itself are authentic, its *genuineness* is established. If its facts are authentic, its *authority* is established.

Expressed concretely in the use of the Epistle of Barnabas. The first question is of authenticity, — *not the authenticity of the Epistle of Barnabas*, but the authenticity of this document before us, which is supposed to be the work known as the Epistle of Barnabas. The authorities for this identification are examined, and the work evidenced to be that work. It is therefore authenticated as the Epistle of Barnabas. It is authentic. But in the course of time, by scribal errors, various changes have crept in which affect the integrity of the text, and the later editions of Gebhardt u. Harnack, Hilgenfeld, and Funk, give us a much purer text than *e.g.* the editions of Voss.

But although the work which we have is confessedly authentic, and the integrity of its text sufficient, so that we have the work substantially as it was known to Origen and Clement of Alexandria, yet there is a question whether this document was after all the work of Barnabas, and it has come to be generally agreed that it is not *genuine*. This is not simply a question of authorship, because the same line of question would arise if a work were anonymous, and directed to or from a given place, or pretended to be written at a given time.

But though it is not genuine, many of its statements about various things are trustworthy, and the analysis of what is and what is not determines the authority of the Epistle for questions relating to the canon, or to church doctrine and life in the early church.

In brief, this work is the authentic Epistle of Barnabas. The integrity of its text is fairly preserved. It is not genuine, but yet its contents have a certain limited authority. Its authorship is unknown, and its date disputed even among those who agree in putting it much later than the apostle Barnabas.